



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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REMINDER THAT CHARTER VESSEL OR HEADBOAT PERMITS ARE REQUIRED FOR THE REEF FISH FISHERY AND COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGICS FISHERY IN GULF OF MEXICO FEDERAL WATERS

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) implemented Amendment 14 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic and Amendment 20 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico on June 16, 2003. The rule established a 3-year moratorium on the issuance of charter vessel or headboat (for-hire) permits for the coastal migratory pelagics and reef fish fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the Gulf of Mexico. In addition, as a consequence of the moratorium, the current charter vessel/headboat permit system for coastal migratory pelagic fish has been restructured to provide separate permits for the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic fisheries. "Open access" permits issued prior to the moratorium were invalid as of November 13, 2003. The intended effect of this rule is to cap the number of for-hire vessels operating in these respective fisheries at the current level while the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council evaluates the need for further management actions that may be needed to manage/rebuild these fishery resources, and to promote attainment of optimum yield.

This Bulletin is to remind charter vessel and headboat operators that if they fish for coastal migratory pelagic or reef fish species in EEZ waters of the Gulf of Mexico, they are required to

have the appropriate vessel permits. Operators of, and clients aboard, vessels without valid charter vessel/headboat permits are not allowed to fish for or possess, in or from the EEZ, species from these species groups.

Persons seeking a charter vessel/headboat permit for Gulf coastal migratory pelagic fish or Gulf reef fish may transfer an existing permit to their vessel, with or without sale of the permitted vessel, providing that the permit does not have a historical captain endorsement. Permits without the historical captain endorsement are transferable between individuals. Permits with an historical captain endorsement may only be transferred to a vessel operated by the historical captain.

The transfer of an existing moratorium permit also has additional passenger capacity provisions. Please contact the NOAA Fisheries Permit Branch if you anticipate purchasing a moratorium permit for transfer to your vessel. Questions regarding permits, including permit requirements, permit transferability, or permit renewal, should be directed to the NOAA Fisheries' Permits Branch at 727-570-5326.

NOAA Fisheries is an agency of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.



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